

Text by Tina Causey-Escobedo
Photography by Steve Keith

“Many of my costume inspirations over the years have come from dreams,” shares Gerard Halley, one of Carnival’s most respected costume designers. And this year, for Carnival 55, those dreams will really come alive when Gerard rolls out more than 20 spectacular showpieces and a road piece under the theme of *twisted dreams*.

Before I get into what Gerard has in store, let me break down the mechanics of a typical Carnival parade. Each parade has groups. Each of those groups picks an overall theme that it carries throughout its entire presentation. Each larger group’s presentation consists of one (or more) music trucks—usually, the flatbeds of semis carry bands playing the popular Carnival tunes of the season that keep everyone shuffling along; a massa—the group’s main body composed of sometimes hundreds of participants in basic costumes based on the theme; and sections—each one is usually headed by one of the Island’s costume designers who designs showpieces and body pieces (these are the larger, fuller, and more-detailed costumes) that are a spin-off of the group’s theme. The larger the group, the more sections it may have. The sections also usually feature their own road pieces, which are small floats pulled by a team of people, and sometimes larger floats, called carosas, pulled by a vehicle. It is with one of these sections that Gerard



Behind the SEAMS

One local costume designer makes a bold statement for Carnival 55



will bring to life his *twisted dreams*. Are you with me so far?

Although most of the costume designers are free to switch the Carnival group they participate with each season, most designers stick with the same group year after year. Gerard is organizing his section in conjunction with the OREO Posse Carnival (OPC), a group that made its debut in the Carnival scene just two years ago but is quickly becoming one of the most popular.

OPC's theme this year is *Fantasy*, providing the perfect canvas for Gerard to use some of his wildest dreams and unusual concepts. "It seems like just about every theme under the sun has been done at one time or another for Carnival throughout the years. OPC's *Fantasy* theme left the door wide open

for me to really go out on a limb creatively—kind of an ‘anything goes’ notion,” the designer explains.

Gerard, excited to produce such unusual designs, took on the extra burden of making sure that every costume in his section is unique. He began by consulting several artists who specialize in inking Carnival costumes on paper for designers. Gerard explains that he shared his visions, thoughts, and details of the various costumes with the artists, and once those visions were captured on paper, they were used as the foundation for the execution of making the costumes.

With the designs sketched out, Gerard then called in each of his section participants to mull over the renderings and choose the one that best suits his or her taste and body type. Oftentimes the designs were tweaked here and there until both Gerard and the participants were happy with the final plan.

From there, it was off to the seamstress for measurements so that the base of each costume fits its owner perfectly. A visit to the welder for the foundations of the shoulder pieces was also necessary;





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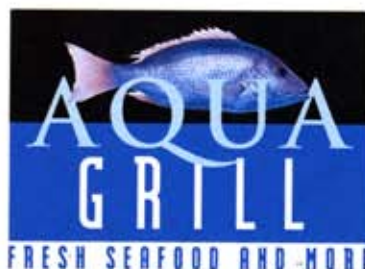


"Our twisted dreams theme is definitely way out there—a bit of Gothic mixed with glamour, nightmares mixed with dreams... people will 'get it' or they won't, but either way, they will remember us," says Gerard.

a perfect fit along the shoulders and back is essential since some of these shoulder pieces can weigh upwards of 50 pounds and will be carried for miles in the hot sun along the parade route.

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The entire process, from developing the concept to actually hitting the parade route, takes months. Often, there is no rest for the weary, as many groups choose the next year's theme the day after the Grand Parade. And so it begins—again! 



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